



BETHUNE-COOKMAN UNIVERSITY

Founded in 1904 by Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune

Edison O. Jackson, Ed.D., President

COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS

October 6, 2015

To: The Instructional Quality Commission
c/o Thomas Adams, Executive Director
143 N Street, Suite 3207
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re:
the Aryan Invasion/Migration Portion of the History-Social Science Framework 2015

Namaste, Commissioner:

As an academic and scholar of India and the religions of Hinduism and Buddhism, I take issue with the proposed narrative portion to be presented October 8 and 9 regarding the origin of Sanskrit and the Vedic peoples in India. It reflects out-of-date and highly controversial scholarship on the subject. Lines 806-228 of grade 6 reads:

"The Harappan civilization steadily declined after 1900 BCE, perhaps owing to ecological factors such as seismic events, deforestation, salt buildup in the soil, and persistent drought, including the drying up of the Sarasvati River around 2000 BCE. Indian history then entered the Vedic period (ca. 1500-500 BCE), an era named for the Vedas, Sanskrit religious texts passed on for generations through a complex oral tradition. In that period, people speaking Indic languages, which are part of the larger Indo-European family of languages, entered South Asia, probably by way of Iran. Gradually, Indic languages, including Sanskrit, spread across northern India. They included the ancestors of such modern languages as Hindi, Urdu, and Bengali. The early Indic speakers were most likely animal herders. They may have arrived in India in scattered bands, later intermarrying with populations perhaps ancestral to those who speak Dravidian languages, such as Tamil and Telugu [sic] in southern India and Sri Lanka today. In the same era, nomads who spoke Indo-Iranian languages moved into Persia. Indic, Iranian, and most European languages are related."

Without using the word "Aryan," this is simply a restatement of the 1848 Aryan invasion theory of F. Max Muller which has never found substantial evidence outside of conclusions from paleo-linguistics, and is contradicted by both archaeological and genetic research. It also includes the contested idea that the people of Indus civilization spoke a proto-Dravidian language, a theory supported by no substantial evidence. The passage acknowledges no debate on the issue, despite the opposition of major historians and archaeologists, such as the Indus civilization expert Johnathan Mark Keynoyer, who pronounced the Aryan invasion/migration theory "absurd."

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In place of the above paragraph, I recommend and endorse the carefully considered wording proposed by Dr. Shiva Bajpai to the Commission in the submission of November 25, 2014 by the Uberoi Foundation Institute for Curriculum Advancement. This paragraph states the known facts while acknowledging the debate over the issue:

“Harappan civilization steadily declined after 1900 BCE, perhaps owing to seismic events, river capture and ecological factors. The next period of Indian history, (ca. 2000-500 BCE), is termed the Vedic and Later Vedic Period as the Vedas, a group of religious scriptures, became prominent during this time. The people who composed the Rig Veda in Sanskrit lived in the “Land of the Seven Rivers,” which corresponds to the Harappan/Indus-Sarasvati region. The Rig describes the Sarasvati as “the most mighty of rivers” flowing from the Himalayas to the ocean. Therefore the Rig had to be composed before 2000 BCE, by which time the river had dried up. The Sanskrit language is part of the Indo-European family of languages, including most languages of northern India such as Hindi, and nearly all of the European languages including Latin and Greek. To explain how Sanskrit came to be in India, 19th-century historians proposed that Sanskrit-speaking people came in a series of invasions from central Asia, destroying the existing Indian civilization. But there is no evidence of such conquest. Today some historians hold that the Vedic people came in peaceful migrations from central Asia; a growing number of others believe they were indigenous to India. In either case, there was a significant disruption of Indian society from 1900 BCE onward, with a large section of the Harappan population moving to the Ganga plains and other areas within and even beyond India.”

It is my sincere hope that you will consider the latest scholarship that casts doubt on the Aryan Invasion Theory and that you will adopt the proposed alternative narrative above.

Respectfully submitted,



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